

# Conserving the Future

## *Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation*



*Be a part of a  
bright future  
for national  
wildlife  
refuges and  
America's  
wildlife.*

*Refuge manager with portable radio, 1948. Refuge manager sending a text, 2011. USFWS*

This document is not a “cookbook” with all the details but instead provides the big picture, giving everyone the opportunity to determine what this new vision means for them and their community. We need your help and heart to make this vision a reality.

### How We Got Here

The document is the culmination of more than 18 months of conversation, deliberation and unprecedented online discussion about the future course of the Refuge System. Its development involved not only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees, but also Refuge System Friends, non-governmental organizations, tribes, state wildlife agencies, sportsmen, and the nation's broad conservation community.

In finalizing the vision, the Refuge System considered more than 10,000 comments and welcomed over 2,300 members to a social network built into a website: [www.AmericasWildlife.org](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org). Over 240 bold ideas were aired online like never done before in the Service.

### Summary

The *Conserving the Future* vision document has 24 individual recommendations. There are several strong themes: the need for strategic, collaborative, science-based landscape conservation; effective public outreach, education and environmental awareness; a goal of making the Service's workforce more closely reflect the nation's diversity; and a priority of reaching

urban America as never before. *Conserving the Future* underscores the importance of building and expanding partnerships – working with other federal agencies, states, tribes, conservation organizations and citizens.

The *Conserving the Future* vision is available online at:

[www.AmericasWildlife.org/vision](http://www.AmericasWildlife.org/vision)

The vision is organized into three primary chapters:

### Chapter 1 – Wildlife and Wildlands

Contains the foundational elements of our conservation design and delivery.

### Chapter 2 – Connected Conservation Constituency

Includes the broad concepts of public stewardship, an urban refuge initiative, getting the word out, and the outside connection.

### Chapter 3 – Leading Conservation into the Future

Recognizes that the Service needs leaders who can embrace change and innovation, anticipate opportunities, and take calculated risks.

We share a belief that we must change the world to conserve the future of America's wildlife and our planet for generations to come – overcoming all of the challenges we face.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service created a vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System as part of a larger movement for strategic, science-based landscape conservation and growing a connected conservation constituency.

The *Conserving the Future* vision is built on the foundation and inspiration of *Fulfilling the Promise* – the Refuge System's vision developed with partners in 1999.



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## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Among the vision document's 24 recommendations are:

- Plan for strategic growth of the Refuge System.
- Launch an urban refuge initiative.
- Create a strategy to increase quality hunting and fishing opportunities – especially for youth and people with disabilities.
- Enhance inventory and monitoring of Refuge System resources.
- Create a climate change strategy for the Refuge System.

The *Conserving the Future* vision was born in the knowledge that we are losing ground – literally and figuratively. The conservation landscape – and the stakes – have changed. The scale of issues and challenges we face is unprecedented and no single entity has the resources to address such challenges on its own. We must work together to conserve America's wildlife and wild places.

### A Final Call to Action

*Conserving the Future* is one more chapter in the story of the National Wildlife Refuge System. In its final pages, the vision document says,

*Now this story compels you to add your own chapter and take your place among a long line of conservation heroes.*



Follow our social media profiles to stay informed, or use them to share your story.

[www.facebook.com/americaswildlife](http://www.facebook.com/americaswildlife)  
[www.twitter.com/americaswild](http://www.twitter.com/americaswild)

We care about this vision because we share a love for wildlife and wild places, and we must work together to protect and conserve them for future generations.

*How do we move forward?* This vision gives us a set of shared priorities to focus on. We will be more successful if we work together and strategically.

### Implementation

An Executive Implementation Council – composed of the leadership of the Refuge System – has been charged with completing a general implementation plan by January 20, 2012, 90 days after the vision's October 20 release. The vision charter, signed at the *Conserving the Future* conference, calls for implementation of most of the 24 recommendations in the next five years, -and the vision will guide the Refuge System for the next decade.

Implementation planning has already begun. Nine implementation teams have been formed in the areas of strategic growth; urban wildlife refuge initiative; leadership; planning; scientific excellence; community partnerships; hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation; and interpretation and education. Each team has about a dozen Service employees and is empowered to reach out to other employees, Friends organi-

zations, partners, and subject matters experts. The teams will develop the policies and actions we need to make the vision a reality. The teams are expected to complete their work mostly by the spring of 2012.

### Get Involved...

**Discover your own vision** – In the pages of *Conserving the Future* are broad ideas and some specific directions for the future of the Refuge System. Read them and think critically about what they mean for you and your community.

**Find inspiration** – Relive the experience of the *Conserving the Future* conference in Madison by watching video highlights on YouTube at:

[www.youtube.com/americaswildlife](http://www.youtube.com/americaswildlife)

Find interesting speakers and thinkers on conservation and other issues, and incorporate what they offer into how you think about your role in our shared future.

**Be heard** – Let us know what you think and what your community is doing to help implement *Conserving the Future*. Join the social network on the website for [AmericasWildlife.org](http://AmericasWildlife.org) and any of the groups that we have created for the implementation teams.



Near Leslie Canyon NWR in the day by William Radke, USFWS.



Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes NWR at night by Ian Shive.